

Minami-Alps National Park on the Map

Minami-Alps National Park is one of the greatest mountain parks in Japan that has more than 10 mountains over 3,000 meters, including Japan's second highest mountain, Mt. Kitadake (3,193m). It borders Yamanashi, Nagano, and Shizuoka prefectures. It has a long north-south direction, approx. 50 kilometers and approx. 15 kilometers in the east and west.

Minami-Alps is considered to be the southernmost point where glaciers once existed in Japan and the southernmost point in the world where plants from the Ice Age, such as the *Callianthemum hondoense* and *Dryas octopetala* have remained to this day. Also, it is a habitat for precious wildlife from the Ice Age, like the rock ptarmigan.

The number of visitors in recent years is approximately 600,000 per year.

North Area

Since Mt. Kitadake, Mt. Kaikomogatake (Mt. Higashi-komagatake), and Mt. Senjogatake in the northern area have a relatively short approach, many climbers visit.



Mt. Kosenjogatake with many climbers



Climbers going up the Okanbazawa route



The ridgeline of Mt. Kitadake in the morning

South Area

Mt. Hijiridake, Mt. Akaishidake, and Arakawa Sanzan Mountains in the southern area have a longer approach, and climbing these mountains requires reasonable physical strength and appropriate climbing wear. In recent years, however, mountain huts were placed and the area has become more popular among climbers.



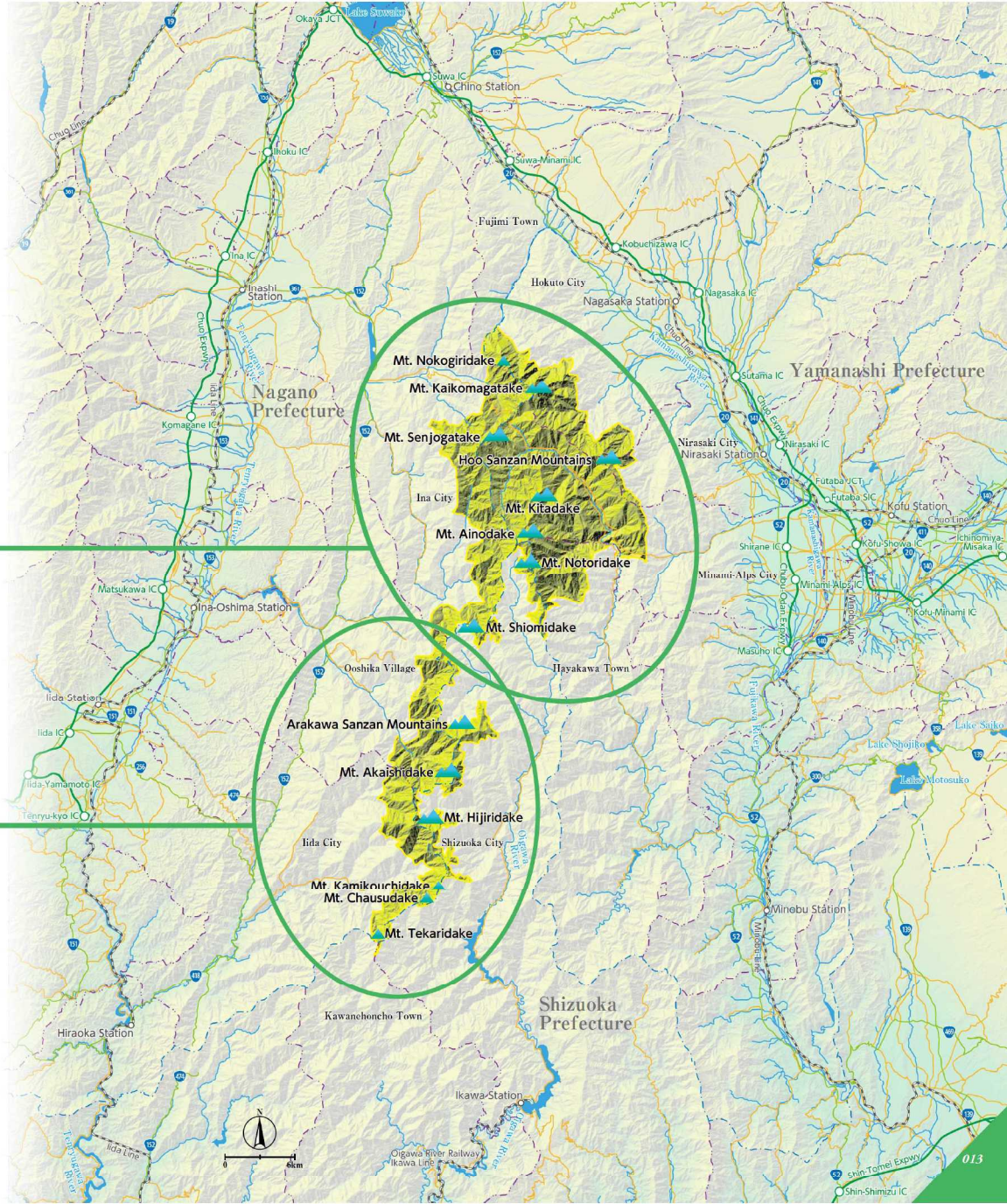
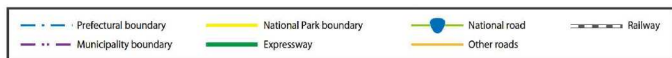
Walking along the ridge for Mt. Kamikochidake



Enjoying the view of Mt. Akaishidake



At an alpine meadow on Mt. Warusawadake



Description of the Minami-Alps National Park

Minami-Alps National Park is the only national park that has "Alps" in its name, and also one of the best mountain parks in Japan. In recent years, the efforts for conservation and sustainable utilization of the regions around the Minami-Alps National Park have been taken by the management of local government. This section introduces the distinctive nature of the Minami-Alps and how the area has been protected up until now.

- National Park Designation: June 1, 1964
- Park Area: 35,752 hectares
- Visitors: 510,000 (in 2011)

Features of the Minami-Alps National Park

Minami-Alps consists of three mountain systems: Kaikoma/Hoo Mountains, Shirane Mountains, and Akaishi Mountains. There are more than 10 mountains over 3,000 meters, including Mt. Kitadake (3,193 meters) which is the second highest mountain in Japan. The headwaters of the Oigawa river, Tenryugawa river, and Fujikawa river all flow through Minami-Alps.

It is the southernmost mountain range among the Japanese-Alps. As for its climate, it has more rain in summer and less snow in winter, so it is called the "Rainy Minami-Alps" as opposed to the Kita-Alps being called the "Snowy Kita-Alps" for its heavy snow. There are many deeply eroded V-shaped valleys formed by the abrasive actions of flooded rivers caused by large amount of rainfall. Also a distinctive feature of Minami-Alps is its highly elevated tree line and the area near the mountain ridges are covered with alpine forests, due to less snow accumulation as compared to Kita-Alps area.

It is the southernmost point in Japan where signs of once existing glaciers



▲View of Senchio ridge from Mt. Shiomidake

can be observed, and the glacial/periglacial landforms which were formed approximately 20,000 years ago exist in the alpine region. The Kar glacier (Cirque), once on Mt. Senjogatake and Arakawa Sanzan, is one of them. This landform was formed because the peak was carved by glaciers, and a roundish gentle valley, which looks like it had been scooped up with a spoon are its features. Rare species from the Ice Age, which had a wide distribution from that era, still live up in the alpine regions such as rock

ptarmigan, *Callianthemum hondoense*, and *Dryas octopetala*. Furthermore, Minami-Alps is the habitat for various kinds of insects including alpine butterflies and many endemic species such as *Parapodisma caelestis* (Grasshopper).

For a long time, it has also been a place of mountain worship. It serves an important part not only for its appearance, geological structure and diversity of species, but also for its culture.



▲Kosenjo Kar in Mt. Senjogatake (Cirque)



▲Mt. Fuji and *Dryas octopetala*



50-year history of the Minami-Alps National Park

The history of Minami-Alps National Park starts back in 1950, before it became a designated national park. In that year, the Minami-Alps National Park Designation Promotion Committee was founded by Yamanashi Prefecture, Nagano Prefecture, Shizuoka Prefecture, and related municipalities. For 15 years, they had been in operation, working to help the Minami-Alps region obtain a national park status. In those days, it seemed that being an identified national park was a desired means of promoting tourism.

On June 1st, 1964, Minami-Alps National Park became the 23rd designated national park, the same time as Shiretoko's designation. It was also the same year when the Tokaido Shinkansen opened to the public and Tokyo Olympics were held. All of which were symbols of high economic growth.

Around 1970, a social trend had globally shifted to environment issues, and both the companies and the government were forced to change their stance. In keeping with this trend, the Super Rindo (Arterial Forest Road), went into construction in Minami-Alps from the mid 1970's to the mid 1980's. This got national attention

as a symbolic example of natural environmental protection.

In 2004, the Passenger Car Traffic Control to Hirogawara was introduced to secure the safety of the traffic along the forest road, on the Yamanashi side, and to conserve its natural environment. In 2008, the ranger office was established, and on-site park rangers who belong to the Ministry of the Environment were stationed.

Since there are no people residing on the Alps, and the mountains are deep, the effect from it being artificially developed is relatively small. However, from around 1998, Japanese deer have been attracted to alpine meadows and ridges. These meadows once colored the alpine

region, but in recent years, the deer have caused them some damage from treading and feeding. To deal with this problem, a Minami-Alps alpine floras conservation liaison council was established in 2009 by administrative organizations, and new measures and policies were developed. Researches, catching, and installation of deer protection fences, were put into place.

On the other hand, Minami-Alps National Park and locals had been working together energetically. As a result of their efforts, the "Minami-Alps Geopark" (median tectonic line area) was designated as a Japanese Geopark in 2008, and Minami-Alps was registered under UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in June, 2014.



▲Deer protection fences installed in Hijiridaira



▲Norogawa-Hirogawara Information Center completed in 2010.

[Column] Minami-Alps Super-Rindo Issue



▲Press conference in front of the Choei Hut



▲Going down to Kitazawa from the end of the Super Rindo

"Super Rindo (Arterial Forest Road)" had been constructed in 23 mountainous areas in Japan from 1965 to 1990. These multipurpose roads were intended for general use, sightseeing, timber transportation and forestry work.

In Minami-Alps, the construction of the "Minami-Alps Super Rindo" begun in 1967 with the plan to go from Ashiyasu Village (current Minami-Alps City) in Yamanashi Prefecture to Hase Village (current Ina City) in Nagano Prefecture through the Kitazawa Pass.

Around 1970, eco-awareness had increased globally, and pollution and development issues had become a subject of social concern in Japan. In 1971, the Environment Agency (current Ministry of the Environment) was established. A protest movement carried out by nature conservation groups, started when the construction of the Minami-Alps Super Rindo started, believing it would destroy nature and the environment. It was treated as a symbolic nature conservation issue, called "Development OR Nature Conservation. The Battle of the Kitazawa Pass". Around the Kitazawa Pass, a standoff was under way between the construction side and the natural conservation groups.

In the end, the Environment Agency had suspended the construction of the non-constructed section of the Kitazawa Pass. After four years of conducted research and deliberations, the Agency finally approved the plan, subject to the concrete conservation measures, including a road operation after completion. In 1979, the forest road, the Kitazawa Pass, was completed after 13 years since the construction was launched.

How to enjoy Minami-Alps National Park

The main attraction at Minami-Alps National Park is mountain climbing and nature watching. To get the most enjoyment out of Minami-Alps National Park, it is important to gather the latest information and prepare and plan your trip prior to visiting the park. Please follow the rules and etiquette in order to keep it a pleasant environment for visitors and the park.

Gathering information prior to visiting the Park

Minami-Alps National Park home page

This contains information about Minami-Alps National Park and links to other sources of information regarding mountain huts and traffic information, etc.
<http://www.env.go.jp/park/minamialps/index.html>



Obtaining information on site

Ashiyasu Mountain Museum

This is located near the private car control bus stop in Ashiyasu, Yamanashi. The exhibition focuses around the nature, history, and culture of Minami-Alps. There are also various books about mountain topics for public reading.

1570 Aza Ashiyasu-Ashikura, Minami-Alps City, Yamanashi Prefecture 400-0241
TEL: 81-55-288-2125
Closed on Wednesday
(but open in summer season)



Norogawa-Hirogawara Information Center

Located in Hirogawara, Yamanashi. The information center and ticket booth for the bus is on the second floor. Information on mountain trails and weather are also available. The temporary police substation is open during the summer season.

1685 Aza Norogawairi, Ashiyasu-Ashikura, Minami-Alps City, Yamanashi Prefecture 400-0241
TEL: 81-90-2673-2405
Open mid-June ~ beg. November



Minami-Alps Shizen Fureai Center Southern Alps Nature Experience Center

Located at the Sawarajima Lodge in Ikawa-Tashiro, Shizuoka Prefecture. Information on mountain climbing and weather can be obtained.

1301-2 Tashiro, Aoi-ku, Shizuoka City, Shizuoka Prefecture 428-0505
TEL: 81-547-46-4717
Open end of April ~ beg. November



enjoy

your

time

The Minami-Alps Country Codes – Seven things for visitors to follow –

Minami-Alps is one of Japan's greatest mountain national parks. To preserve its natural beauty and for the safety of visitors, we ask that you follow these rules. Thank you for your cooperation.

Code 1



Do not pick, catch, collect, or harm the wildlife and plants. Alpine plants and wildlife in this area have flourished in a rocky environment after surviving several ice ages. Please act in a caring and respectable manner, so that these plants and wildlife can continue to flourish.

Code 2



Do not leave the mountain path. There are precious alpine plants and many wild animals living on the mountain. Please stay on the mountain trails when you walk and take pictures, etc.

Code 3



No pets are allowed in the park. They will pose a threat to the small animals such as rock ptarmigan and short-tailed weasels, and there is a risk of spreading epidemic diseases. Please do not bring your pet to the mountain park.

Code 5



Please take your own garbage home with you.

Code 4



Do not use sharp poles. Walking poles with sharp ends are dangerous. They can cause injury to other people and damage both the plants and the trails. Please be considerate, and use them only in appropriate places or place rubber caps onto the ends of your climbing stocks.

Code 6



No Graffiti. Please do not place memorial plates or draw/scratch on the rocks.

Code 7



Keep the mountain huts clean. Mountain huts and shelters are used as stations in case of an accident search and rescue operation. Please use these facilities with care, and clean up after use.